1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

858 dying before the age of about ten are usually said to be reincarnations of dead people whose life was cut short before it had attained its full span (for the Lepcha the normalhuman span of life is four score years) and have therefore returned to the world as a human being to finish their term of life before proceeding to their next incarnation. Although live children are so insignificant, dead ones
775 turn into num-een *moong*, almost the most malevolent and dangerous of all devils. As a generalisation it may be said that in so far as human beings remain attached to this world after death, it is as devils, and, the younger the dead person, the more dangerous the devil he may leave behind. Even seeing dead people in dreams (unless they are climbing snow mountains, which indicates that their souls are entering heaven) is dangerous; for the simulacra of the dead are in reality the devils which caused the death.

755 In the case of minor physical injuries no religious cure is
751 employed; but more serious accidents, such as falling from a tree or a high rock, are considered to be due to malevolent supernaturals and exorcisms have to be performed to avert the repetition of such injuries for the sufferer or other members of his household. If one member of a household dies a violent death the survivors should repeat annually and at the birth of each new member of the family certain apotropaic rites. It will be remembered that a propensity to violent death, like a propensity to being chased by a bear, is an
[582] hereditary taint which must be guarded against in selecting a marriage partner.

787 Horoscopes differ somewhat in their emotional affect from the other lamaist ceremonies. They are obligatory and implicitly believed in and have very considerable influence on the life of the person for whom the horoscope is cast. The first horoscope is cast on the third day after a child's birth; in this is determined the child's character, future employment and span of life, and also those illnesses and dangers with which he is threatened and the ceremonies that the parents must perform to avert these dangers. The second horoscope is cast at the instance of the parents and uncles before a marriage is arranged to see that the conjunction of the joint horoscopes is not endangered by unfavourable omens. This is the least compulsive horoscope of all; there are at least twelve signs in it which can be positive or negative and in by far the greater number of horoscopes the signs are mixed; only if the sign for children is entirely negative will the marriage almost always be abandoned. The third horoscope is cast when a person has completed his third, or occasionally

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1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

766 to be described later are more for a protection for the living than as a help for the dead. Only if a young child were to die away from its home would the ceremony of Dek Flee[1] be held to keep away its haunting demon.

● 775 764 It is at death and the ceremonies which surround death that the beliefs and ritual of the Mun and lamas most obviously clash and contradict one another. Both creeds hold that the soul outside the body is lost in some dangerous region through which it must be conducted; and therefore representatives of both creeds help to conduct the soul away. But the soul's destination on these wanderings is completely different; for the lama the soul wanders for forty-nine days in a sort of purgatory, after which it is judged and rewarded and sent on to its next incarnation, whether it be on the earth as another human being or as an animal or to heaven for a period of blessedness or to hell for a period of torment. For the Mun the soul is conducted to the *rumlyang*, where it is born again as a tiny child, very often of a different sex to its former life; in the *rumlyang* the child grows up to maturity and leads a happy and immortal life among all the other dead, a life similar to that here on earth except that there is no death or disease or want.

The implicit contradictions in these beliefs are realised in the case of lamas and nuns, for whom the Mun perform no ceremonies; the souls of lamas and nuns are not led to the *rumlyang* but conducted through the *bardo* or purgatory. But for laymen ceremonies of both religions are held simultaneously; the lamas perform inside the house while the Mun does his ceremonies outside.

764 766 There are three alternative methods of disposing of a corpse; it may be burnt, buried, or thrown into the river. Which method is adopted depends partly on the condition of the deceased and partly on the lama's horoscopes. The lamas and nuns are never buried; they are almost always burnt unless they die in the wet season, in which case their bodies are thrown into the river. Laymen are never burnt; whether they are buried or thrown into the river depends on the lama's horoscope; the greater number are buried. Young children should always be thrown into the river, but occasionally an exception is made; thus Patek's mother when she lost in rapid succession four children in infancy burnt the body of the last one in anger and as a protest at the way the supernaturals were treating her; but such behaviour is extremely uncommon.

764 As soon as a person dies the position in which he has expired

[1] Vide sub, p. 352–353.

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764 When the ceremony is finished the clothes of the deceased are divided among the lamas; the Dorjé Lapoon gets the best coat and the *omzets* the other garments. Before these are worn the lama will hold some mustard seeds in his hand and pray silently; he will then throw the seeds on the clothes; this is considered sufficient disinfection; after that the garment is washed and can then be worn or sold. In the case of a dead lama his skull-drum and bell goes to the Dorjé Lapoon and his rosary to the officiating *kané*; the *kané* also gets the *patyoot* with the rupee and grain inside, the dead man's plate and cup, and the big scarf which covered the face of the image. At a lama's *sanglion* the nuns are given a rupee a head and a maund of grain between them, and the lamas are given Rs. 20 and three maunds of grain to divide. For a layman's *sanglion* the gifts are usually considerably less.

The day after the *sanglion* is finished the place where the body was disposed of is visited by some near relations of the deceased to see if there are any footprints in the near neighbourhood which would indicate that the dead man had reincarnated as an animal. The footprints of cats, dogs and tigers do not indicate reincarnation; they merely show that a devil has passed by in this form, and I never heard any actual incident of the prints of any other animal being discovered.

If everything consumed in this *sanglion* were paid for in cash it would represent an expense of over Rs. 200, for a continuous feast with meat has to be provided for all present. If the survivors are poor everybody will bring contributions of money and food. The ceremony is absolutely necessary to free the soul of the dead man [775] from devils and lead it to heaven. Were it omitted the soul would wander miserably on earth, doing harm to the survivors, and eventually reincarnating as a worm or some noisome insect or beast of prey.

Money should be distributed to the monasteries in the name of the dead man; if he was a poor man it need only be given to the three monasteries of Zongu, but if he was rich to the monasteries all over Sikkim.

It is considered desirable that the Mun *sanglion* should take place on the same day as the disposal of the corpse. If, however, the lamas' *sanglion* is postponed that of the Mun may be also. Very few Mun know how to perform the death ceremony; in Lingthem the only one who knew how to was old Pumri and she was never employed as it was not considered suitable for a woman to perform

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

but the general effect in the gloomy rooms of a semi-darkened monastery is often not unpleasing.

Apart from its actual built-in decoration every monastery has a few hanging wall-pictures, or *Thang-Ka* as they are called. These are generally painted on canvas or cotton, which is first prepared by stretching it while damp over a wooden frame, from which it is detached when completed. The mounted Tibetan painting generally has a tricoloured silk border, usually of red, yellow and blue. According to Waddell this "is alleged to represent the spectrum colours of the rainbow, which separates sacred objects from the material world. The outer border of blue is broader than the others, and broadest at its lowest border, where it is usually divided by a vertical patch of brocade embroidered with the dragons of the sky. A veil is invariably added as a protection against the grimy smoke of incense, lamps and dust. The veil is of flimsy silk, often adorned with sacred symbols, and it is hooked up when the picture is exhibited." There were several such pictures in our room at Lingtem, but all were of very inferior quality, and in no way to be compared with some of the really beautiful works of art one often sees in Tibetan monasteries.

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I started this chapter with an account of the local Church's leader, and it seems fitting to close it with a few details about the head of the civil administration. Chala Mandal is fifty-nine, but like most Lepchas does not look his age, and would never believe that he was nearly twenty years my senior. He has been ill for several weeks, and does not often leave his house. It was divined that his trouble comes from Subdok Mung. It appears that the Mandal's first wife was a Mun, and that when she died her body, instead of being buried, was cremated, a rite that is usually accorded only to members of the Church. The burial ceremonies were carried out by Lamas, no Mun, which was not in accordance with custom, being present. For this reason her soul was angry, and

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instead of turning eventually into a god it transformed itself 159
into an emanation of Subdok Mung, and as such has been 622
troubling the Mandal ever since. The local Mun and Lamas 775
have held a consultation, as a result of which it has been
decided that certain ceremonies are necessary; but these will
not be efficacious unless carried out by a particular Mun who
lives in Gyatong. The Mandal sent three times for this man, 783
but he always refused to come; and it was only after being
offered a substantial present of *chi* that he at last consented
to attend. We were invited to witness the ceremony. When
we arrived most of the family was collected in the kitchen,
where the old Mun was seated with the usual offerings in
front of him; there were several heaps of grain, lumps of
butter, and one or two lighted lamps, the whole arranged on a
cloth and placed on top of a winnowing-fan. By his side was a
bowl of *chi*, out of which he dipped with a piece of banana
leaf while making his incantations. He started by asking the
demons to accept what he was giving them and finished by
asking the gods in general to bless the Mandal, and implored
them particularly to give him a son. The actual words he
used were somewhat more Rabelaisian than my bald
description suggests, and caused much laughter. After about
a quarter of an hour the "specialist" handed over to the local
Mun, when the offering was taken outside the house and
placed on top of a fence. Nearby was a tethered ox, which
was later killed with a bow and arrow by Gongyop's son.
This beast was being offered to the Subdok Mung as a
substitute for the Mandal's life. We always enjoyed attending
these ceremonies; for apart from their inherent interest we
were invariably offered a portion of the sacrifice, a most
welcome addition to our otherwise unvaried diet of stringy
chicken.

The Mandal's house is equalled only by that of Tafoor, and 342
has a very fine and elaborate altar-room, complete with 622
gilded images, and the twelve volumes of the *Boom*, the 159
shortened version of the Kangyur. Although the Mandal is
not himself a Lama it is usual for all who can afford to do so

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he said that while there was no particular harm in other people catching sight of his beads he must never discuss them, except with other Padim or Mun. If he did the god would be angry and refuse in future to help him: moreover, he was in the habit of using this particular rosary to determine the outcome of his love affairs. If he talked about it there was a chance that it might play him false! And so he begged to be excused. As he said this he tucked it away, well out of sight.

It is believed that when a Mun dies his soul returns to its celestial home, where it changes into the god Hit, the guardian of which is Pong Rum, the patron of all hunters. The body is always buried and not treated in any special way. Even the soul like that of ordinary people needs direction after death, or it will not know which road to take. A Mun must be careful never to touch a corpse. If he did so his god would leave him for the time being, and he would be ill for at least two months. There is no harm in his looking upon a dead body; nor will anything ensue if he touches the bodies of dead animals. Should he happen by mistake to touch a corpse he must get a Lama to cleanse his body with consecrated water, at the same time burning incense in the room while this is being done. After this he will regain his powers; but nothing, it may be noted, can cause the god permanently to desert the Mun.

In cases of illness in Lingtem a Lama is always called in first. He decides what treatment is necessary and then arranges accordingly. As a matter of fact, I cannot remember attending any ceremony, apart, of course, from purely religious festivals, at which a Lama and Mun were not both officiating; a regular Harley Street conspiracy!

In addition to Lamas and Muns, Lepchas also have recourse to people known as Nunjimu. This word does not appear in the dictionary: but the verb *Nun* (from which the word is presumably derived), which is Tibetan, is given as meaning "to be insensible, or cataleptic." These people are not nowadays often employed, and in Lingtem there was only one. According to Gongyop the original Nunjimus

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THE TRIMMINGS

778 The following list reads something like a recipe in a
775 cookery book. Its understanding, however, is not essential; and anyone who finds such things as "Mrs. Beeton" dull may skip this paragraph and proceed direct to the story.

Having completed the figure of the Go-sum, take the following:

Lukor Chu-Ni; twelve. These are small *torma*, about two inches in height, pressed out flat and stamped with a design in flour. They represent the separate years of the Tibetan twelve-year cycle.

Tako; four. These are miniature cups of dough. They are filled with *chi*, after which bits of raw meat are added.

Chumi; one. A *chumi* is the ordinary Lepcha word for a lamp. This miniature one is made of dough, as is its wick. It cannot therefore be lighted.

Gyachen Diji; four of these are required. These are small *torma* with spreading bases, and represent the gods of the four directions. One is placed at each corner of the figure.

Par Chongo: one. This is a long strip of dough, rather like a thin and elongated sausage. It has a design pressed upon it in flour and represents the animals, birds, and insects that live entirely on dry land.

Sa Julgu: one. This is similar to the *Par Chongo* but rather shorter in length. It represents snakes, fish, toads and all other such creatures as live in water or under rocks.

Chongbu Tip-gyu: to taste. These are small twists of dough and look like cigars that have been ill treated. They are used for waving over people. Four or five is the usual number.

Diget: twelve. These are small ordinary *tormas* and represent the demons and gods who live in the human world.

Gyukar Nger-get: fourteen. These are double *tormas*, joined together in pairs. They represent old men and women, and are the servants of the Go-sum. The sexes are not distinguished.

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ANCIENT FUNERAL CEREMONIES OF THE LEPCHAS

R. NEBESKY DE WOJKOWITZ

The teachings and rites of the Unreformed School of Tibetan Buddhism—nowadays the dominant creed in the Sikkim State—have deeply influenced the beliefs and religious practices of the Lepchas, the main group of aboriginal inhabitants in the Sikkim area. In the course of four centuries, which passed since the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism into Sikkim,[1] the original Lepcha traditions became so closely intermingled with ideas and customs of Tibetan origin,[2] that it is now a most difficult task to separate these two groups from each other; this state is still more complicated by the fact that the Lepchas accepted—even if only in a smaller degree—also some of the traditions and customs of the neighbouring Mangars, Limbus,[3] Nepalese and Bhutanese. Among many other customs also ideas concerning the human soul, death and its causes, life after death, etc., as well as the funeral ceremonies themselves were greatly changed under Tibetan influence. Thus the belief in a judgement of the soul by the Lord of the Dead, *Cho ge pă no*[4] (Tb. *Chhos kyi rgyal po*), the migration of the soul through the perils of the *Bar do*[5] (Tb. *Bar do*)—the stage between death and new life—and its rebirth in one of the "six worlds", the punishment of sinners in hell or *Nyó lyang* (Tb. *dMyal ba*), and other well known theories of Tibetan Buddhism are therefore today widely spread among the Lepchas. Oral tradition, however, preserved accounts of the early Lepcha customs and in some of the remote, scarcely accessible valleys of Sikkim the old funeral rites are said to be still observed.

According to the old Lepcha belief,[6] the soul[7] is given to a human being by *Fă grŏng thing* and his wife *Nă zŏng nyo*, the ancestors of the Lepcha race,[8] at the moment of birth. *Nă zŏng nyo*, who is also responsible for the conception, determines of which sex the child is going to be. The place from which the soul comes and to which it again returns after a man's death, is called *Rŭm lyang*, "the place of gods". It is believed, that this place lies somewhere in the hills, close to Mount Kanchenjunga.[9] The soul, once it has returned to the *Rŭm lyang*, will stay there with the spirits of the ancestors and not reincarnate in this world again. It also will not have to undergo any punishment for the sins, which the deceased might have committed during his lifetime.

At the time of birth, the soul is believed to be very small, but later on it becomes gradually bigger, keeping pace with the growth of the body. The soul of a living being is called *A pil* and it

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changes at the moment of death into a spirit, named *Mŭk nyam*; this change itself is termed *Hyit*. The *A pil* is said to get scared very easily and when frightened can even leave the body; the separation of the soul from the body results however in the instantaneous death of the human being. To protect small children from this danger, mothers often fasten round the neck or armwrist of the child a string with a snail shell on it, "as refuge for the soul".[10]

Illness and death are attributed by the Lepchas to a number of malignant demons who have to be propitiated by various ceremonies, in order to prevent their attacks or to rescue a victim from their influence. Among the host of these evil supernaturals, whose names and spheres of influence vary with the traditions of the different parts of the Lepcha land, there are some who are believed to be especially dangerous as they do not satisfy their greed by harming people through illness, but who try either to eat man's flesh or to destroy his soul. A few of these supernatural beings, as *Sang grong mung*, *Dŭt mung* and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*, etc. who seem to have been at one time widely known and feared among the Lepchas, are believed to have vanished since man started clearing the jungle and to settle even in the remotest parts of Sikkim.

Sang grong mung and his wife,—the supernaturals of the Lepchas mostly appear in pairs—are said to have been half men and half apes. Their abode were deep, dark caverns in the hills. They lived on human flesh and to satisfy their hunger they often tried to get people into their power by offering them presents. The person, who had met the *Sang grong mung* or his consort, had no other choice than to accept the gift; however, he had to take it with the back of his hands and not with the palms as customary, otherwise his life was lost.

Dŭt mung and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*—who was always accompanied by her servant *Sŭ mo thor*—had children and they lived in a house, just like men. Their hunting ground was the jungle, where they killed lonely travellers and ate their flesh. *Sŭ mo mung*, who was an ugly ogre with long matted hair and emaciated breasts, is said to have been very fond of seducing young men. To achieve her aim, she could change herself—by brushing her hair back and rubbing her body—into a lovely girl. She induced her victim, to follow her to her house, where she killed and devoured him; but sometimes, if she liked the man, she kept him with her for some time, hiding him from her jealous husband.

Another demon, frequently held responsible for the death of a person, is *Mă zóm mung*, who is said to appear in the form of a huge black dog with ferociously gleaming eyes and a flaming mouth. To

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prevent this evil spirit from returning to a house, where he had just caused a death, the mourners on their way back from the funeral put hedges of thorns across the road, to prevent *Mă zóm mung* from following them. In some localities it is the custom to scare *Mă zóm mung* away by heating during the night after the funeral three huge stones on the hearth. The stones are later brought into the open and somebody of those present calls the name of this demon, asking him to come and eat some meat. The demon, who is believed to be very greedy, comes immediately and tries to swallow the stones, but he burns himself badly and runs away.

Shom mung is a malignant spirit, who causes people to commit suicide or murder. He creeps close to a man from the back and then suddenly enters his mind and taking possession of his victim, forces him ultimately to commit the evil deed. This demon is also held responsible for all accidental death.

A soul, which was captured by *Shom mung*, is unable to proceed to the other world unless it had been freed by a *Mŭn* from the power of the evil spirit. To perform this ceremony, a *Mŭn* has to come in the evening after the funeral to the victim's house. On this occasion, the *Mŭn* is wearing a red dress, with a head-band of the same colour. At the beginning of the ceremony, an animal is killed and its blood collected in a big, flat vessel in order to attract the bloodthirsty spirit. The *Mŭn* then takes her place in front of this vessel and goes into a trance. After some time she suddenly declares that *Shom mung* has entered the container and she throws now into the blood a grass whisk, which she had held ready in her right hand. Leaving the whisk in the vessel —"to keep the demon down"—she grasps a flat stick made from *Nyol kung*[11] wood, which is lying at her right side, and begins to beat frantically the surface of the blood pool, in order to "kill the demon". All those present, shouting and screaming, join her in this beginning, using sticks, stones and knives as weapons. After a while, the *Mŭn* takes the vessel outside the house and pours its contents into a hole, which had been dug previously in the compound, and then all weapons which were used during the ceremony, are also thrown into the pit, which is quickly closed. Only when this ceremony had been performed for somebody, who had fallen victim to *Shom mung*, can his *Mŭk nyam* be guided afterwards in the usual way to the *Rŭm lyang*. It is believed, that unless *Shom mung* is killed, he will become attached to the family which had omitted the rite just described, and he will kill its members one by one.

Another pair of dangerous supernaturals are the demon *Thing mung* and his wife *Nyo mung*, who are able to bring a man's life

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to an end by cutting his "thread of life".

There are however also some spirits, who guard people against the attacks of malignant demons. Among these benevolent supernatural beings, the *A bo a mo să rŭm*, who protect the family and who transfer their protective power from one generation to the other, and *Mŭn kung*, the guardian spirit of life, should be mentioned.

At the moment of death, soul and body, as the Lepchas believe, separate and the soul leaves its temporary abode. At first it lingers in the room for some time, watching the lifeless body. But later, feeling very light as it is not kept down anymore by the heavy human form, it leaves the room and strolls further and further away from the house. It goes now to all the places, which the deceased had visited during his lifetime, and it tries to speak to people it meets on the road, but nobody can hear or see the roaming soul. If no appropriate measures are taken, it might get friendly with the demons and induced by them, can return and start harming people. To prevent this, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn*[13] have to be called, to say the necessary prayers and invocations. The prayers start with an admonition to the deceased to realize, that his life has now come to an end and that he is not among the living anymore.

When performing this rite or any other funeral ceremony, a *Mŭn* has to be very careful not to touch the corpse and also not to take any food in front of the dead, otherwise she would be afflicted by a severe illness. There are however no such restrictions for the *Bong thing*. If no Lepcha sorcerer is to be found in the neighbourhood, anybody who knows the necessary prayers may be called into the house. Also in case that a *Bong thing* or a *Mŭn* died, this rite has to be performed, only in a more elaborate manner.

Those funeral ceremonies of the Lepchas,[13] which had to be carried out at daytime, were called *Sŭng bam*, while those which took place at night were termed *Sŭng lyon*. The cost of these rites was considerable and thus it occured frequently that people had to sell or pawn some of the family property in order to fulfil their duty towards the dead.

When preparing the corpse for the funeral, all jewellery as earrings and rings had to be removed and then the body was washed with lukewarm water ; to use cold water was not customary, as "during lifetime, one would also not offer cold water for washing". Later the body was smeared with some herbs and dressed in an old, but clean garment. To use a new, unworn dress is a custom, which came into vogue only in more recent times among well-to-do Lepcha families. At last the face of the dead was covered with a white cloth and a coin was placed

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764 loose sling to the little finger of the *Mŭn*'s left hand. In her right hand she took a knife, as weapon against evil spirits.

764 After these preparations had been finished, the *Mŭn* works herself
775 gradually into a slight trance, and with a high, loud voice she begins her incantations. She calls upon the *Mŭk nyam* to recognize, that he belongs from now on to the world of the dead, and that he should not hide in trees, stones, rivers, lakes or fire, but he should join the soul of the *Mŭn* for a tour of the Lepcha land. The *Mŭn* sings now for hours a long, rhymed account, the text of which she had learned by heart from her teacher during the time of initiation. She describes to the spirit the beauty of Sikkim, its snow mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes, the forests, fields and lonely dwellings of men. At last, the *Mŭn* guides the spirit down the Teesta River and describing the source of this greatest river of Sikkim, she conducts the *Mŭk nyam* across the Indian plains, "to show it the ocean". But she admonishes the deceased, that he should not gaze too long at the endless sea, as he has to return with her that very night to the Lepcha land. Then again the *Mŭk nyam* is led to the Teesta and following the river upstream, the *Mŭn* guides the spirit back to the house, from which they started the journey.[15]

764 In the early morning, when the darkness of the night begins to
775 fade into the grey of the approaching day, the ceremony reaches its
787 climax. At this time all the relatives of the deceased, who are present in the house, assemble in front of the *Mŭn*. The dresses, jewellery and other personal belongings of the dead person, as well as numerous dishes with various foods are placed near the *Mŭn*, who finishes now her incantations and falls into a full trance. Her eyes close, the face becomes ash-gray and mask-like. Suddenly, tears begin to flow from her eyes and the whole body begins to tremble. This is supposed to be the moment at which the spirit of the deceased enters the body of the *Mŭn*, and using the sorceress as a medium, the *Mŭk nyam* begins to speak through her mouth. He tells now to his relatives the cause of his death and expresses his last wishes, while members of the family in their turn frequently ask the deceased, whether he left perhaps any business unsettled in his lifetime, where some of his possessions, which could not be found are hidden, etc. Many of the older Lepchas who witnessed several times the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, unanimously state that frequently most surprising occurrences take place during this ceremony. It often happens that somebody dies without having disclosed, where he had hidden his money or jewels, and the relatives were searching in vain for these things. If however this question is put to the *Mŭn* in his trance, she usually answers it without hesitation

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and then somebody of those present leaves the room immediately to search at the spot now indicated; he mostly returns within a short time with the missing objects.

While the family property is being inherited according to the old Lepcha law, the personal belongings of the dead are distributed among his closer relatives. This is usually carried out by the *Mŭn*, while still possessed by the *Mŭk nyam*. But not always is this way of dividing the heritage regarded as just, and it frequently leads to quarrels.

At the end of this ceremony, a food offering is made to the dead. A cup with some water is handed to the *Mŭn*,—who still remains in the trance —and she sprinkles some of the water on all the food which had been placed in front of her, thus making it "eatable for the deceased". Then all the members of the family step forward one by one and present a dish with food to the spirit and burn also some incense, together with traces of food, and a container filled with Lepcha beer is given to the *Mŭn* to drink. Shortly after this offering the *Mŭk nyam* leaves the body of the *Mŭn*, who soon returns to full consciousness, and then removes the rope from her left hand. Some of the Lepchas claim, that when the *Mŭn* begins to complain of pain—usually in a part of her body, corresponding to those limbs and organs of the deceased, which had been affected by the deadly illness or accident —it has to be regarded as a reliable sign, that the *Mŭk nyam* is about to leave the medium.

After a short interval, the *Mŭn* ties again the rope to her left hand and goes into a light trance, in order to guide the spirit of the dead to the other world. On the way to the *Rŭm lyang*, an obstacle called *Lep*, which is imagined to be like a tremendous waterfall or a deep precipice, has to be crossed by the *Mŭk nyam* with the assistance of the *Mŭn*. Having overcome this barrier, the spirit is met by *The kung tek*,[16] the first *Bong thing*, and his wife *Ne kung ngal*, the first *Mŭn*. They will enumerate to the deceased the line of his ancestors, mentioning on the seventh place the name of the mountain, with which his clan believes itself to be connected,[17] and then they accompany the spirit, to meet *Fă grŏng thing* and *Nă zŏng nyo*, the ancestors of the Lepchas. In the *Rŭm lyang* the spirits of all, who had died in more recent times, dwell in the form of shadows, while those who died soon after the world had been created, reside here in their bodily form, ready to return to the world should its inhabitants die out.

There are different accounts to be found among the various clans of the Lepchas regarding the way in which the *Mŭk nyam* is supposed to reach the *Rŭm lyang*. The Chronicles of the Maharajas of Sikkim mention a belief of the Sengdenmos, that the spirit goes to

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
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the "Place of Gods" via a subterranean passage, the entrance of which is a cave in the vicinity of Monphu, while the Heemos claim, that the spirit enters this way near a rock called Sing Dang, in the vicinity of the village Samdong. A different cave is said to be the entrance for the dead of the Lingsomo clan. This cave is called Dret gang and it lies near the hamlet of Rabdentsi. A legend current among the Namphagmo Lepchas claims that the dead of this clan do not go to Mt Kanchenjunga, but to the Mennam mountain, which is specially sacred to this clan. They reach the mountain through a subterranean passage the entrance of which is the Phim Leb cave near Lingmo.

The funeral ceremonies end on the seventh day after the burial. At first, on the third day some rice, *ci*, and eggs were brought to the grave and after five more days had passed, a hen is sacrificed and then some prayers are said by a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* in order to chase away all malignant spirits and to cleanse the house from all evil once more.

There was no difference between the burial ceremonies of the *Bar fong mo*, the Lepcha aristocracy, and the *A den* or common people, and the dead of both groups were treated alike. Only the funeral rites for a *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* were performed in a different way. Even today, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* is not cremated, but mostly buried according to the old custom. In his house, the dead person is dressed into the full garment of a Lepcha sorcerer and his face is covered, as customary, with a white cloth and also the coin for *Fă gróng thing* is placed on his forehead. Around the body, all his magical instruments and drugs are spread out, the latter being kept in flat, closed baskets. Furthermore, a small ladder—"to reach with its help the *Rŭm lyang*"—dried fish and birds, the beak or at least some other part of a crane, the beak of a hornbill and numerous baskets containing various foodstuffs are laid all around the corpse. The body is later placed on a bamboo stretcher, together with all objects enumerated above and carried out by the door,—and not by an opening in the wall or floor, as done at the funeral of a common man. Then the body is carried to the grave and placed in the pit in a sitting position. On the left and right sides of the dead two magical sticks (*ceng pă ting*),[15] as used by the sorcerer during his lifetime, are placed and then also all the various paraphernalia, which had been brought on the stretcher, is laid in the grave.

The rites which follow are just like those performed at the funeral of common people. After the ceremony of calling back the *Mŭh nyam* has been carried out, also the spirit of a deceased *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* is conducted to the *Rŭm lyang*, to join the spirits of his ancestors.

are some new details on the composition or use of the thread-cross.

1. THE CHERIM CEREMONY

This ceremony, consisting of three parts, takes place twice a year in honour of the mountain god of Kanchenjunga (*Gangs chan mdzod Inga*, "The five glacier treasuries"), as well as for appeasing evil spirits, to protect the crops from hail and men from diseases. It is partly performed by Mun, partly by lamas, who officiate during the last third of the rite. As a description of the ceremony itself has already been given previously,[21] we shall mention here only the third part of the rite and the form of the thread-cross used herein.

This part is performed by the lamas who direct their sacrifice to all the gods and demons; the main sacrifice is made to the mountain god Kanchenjunga[22] and the "gods of the plains". The essential part of the rite consists in erecting a *deu*, the construction of which starts some four hours earlier. The *deu* consists of nine storeys, made of blue, red, yellow and white thread.[23] This thread-cross is called *mamoo yam deu*.

The Lepcha lamas explain that this structure is erected to appease the malignant ghost of a Tibetan king, who was called Dayom Panoh, "king Dayom". During his lifetime enemies destroyed his palace and when he died his ghost started roaming around and harming people out of revenge. The *deu* should provide a nine-storied palace and entice him to return to Tibet.

Besides the *deu*, an image of a female supernatural being, called *mamoo*, is erected. The effigy of the *mamoo* is made out of ground millet and buckwheat dough. The *mamoo* is represented with outstretched hands, riding a tiger. On her breast she is wearing a necklace, made of butter, while the lower part of her body is covered by a garment, indicated by scratches in the dough. The supernatural being has snakes instead of hair and wears a five-lobed crown, apparently similar to that worn by Tantric lamas.

5:Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer E.J-5 (1937, 1950) 1951
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crosses is called *ma mo mDos*, "The thread-cross of the *ma mo*" and is dedicated to supernatural beings called *ma mo*. This thread-cross seems to be an especially important form, as there is a special Tibetan book on its construction. The *ma mo's* are represented by Tibetan artists as fierce and terrifying female demons; they are frequently met with in Tibetan iconography, where twelve Great *ma mo's* (*ma mo chhen mo*) accompany Yama (*gShin rje*) as his messengers.[24] Since the *mamoo* of the Lepchas is also a female deity and as she has snakes instead of hair and is riding a yawning tiger, she should be regarded as a malignant spirit, most probably belonging or at least related to the *ma mo* group of the Tibetans.

The second syllable in the name of the thread-cross *yam*—seems to correspond to the Tibetan honorific expression for mother, *yum*. This Tibetan word is frequently used in the names of lamaist goddesses and particularly denotes the female consorts or "energies" of Tantric gods. As already mentioned, the word *Deu* corresponds to the Tibetan word *mDos*.

It is interesting to note that this thread-cross is nine-storied, as the number nine is very frequently used in the Bön religion, where many of the deities are depicted as nine headed, are placed into groups of nine, etc.[25] The colour of the thread used for constructing the big *Deu*[26] and especially the colour of the four smaller thread-crosses which are planted in the four corners of the topmost square is nearly identical with the colours attributed to the four main quarters of the world by lamaist traditions: East white (or brown), South yellow (blue), West blue-green (red) and North black (yellow).

As for the story of the Tibetan king Dayom it was not possible to find a parallel in Tibetan mythology. But it may be mentioned, that in an old Tibetan record recently made available in a translation by Prof. Tucci, it is said that the king of the *bDud* demons, called *Mi byams pa khrag po*, "The merciless with the bloody face", was living in a black castle with nine storeys or pinacles.[27]

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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(b) Myths of the Creation of Man

There are several myths current about the creation of man. Pum-thing created the first human beings. The first man was called Ti-gung-thik and his wife was called Ni-gung-ngal. They lived in Mayal-lyang, which lies on the other side of King-tzum-song-bu. There was then no disease, no suffering, no death. Now all human beings return to this place after their death.

In days of yore it was possible to reach this land from the earth. A hunter once came into the district of Mayal. When night overtook him, he prepared to put up for the night. Then he became aware of lights gleaming a little distance away. He approached the place, contacted the people and asked for shelter. They said to him, "What are you doing over here in Ren-dyong?"[34] He replied, "I hunt animals so I can provide myself with food." "Have you then nothing else to eat? Have you no grain to sustain yourself?" "No, I have none," replied the hunter. So they gave him gherkins, rice and millet and gave him instructions about the cultivation of these seeds after the re-migration of the birds after winter. Later on another hunter travelled to the spot and was stranded. He lit a fire and began to prepare his food. The inhabitants came there and were desirous of looking on at the proceedings. The hunter, however, looked upon them as intruders. He grew furious and struck them with a view of driving them away. They said to him, "In our land no one strikes another. We all live in peace and harmony. Take up your belongings and leave the place as quickly as you can, or our dogs will pounce upon you." The hunter looked around and perceived dogs that resembled bears and tigers. He grew terrified and fled away as fast as he could. Great storms followed in his wake; there were landslides and earthquakes; mountains came crashing down and all the entrances to the land were completely sealed over. Ever since this incident Mayal has remained inaccessible.[35]

Gorer gives the following description of Mayal, "The people of Mayal consists of seven brothers each with their own name

34. Dwelling place of the ancestors and now pronounced "den-dyong."
35. Report from Kalimpong.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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775 and each patron of some sort of grain. These seven brothers are progenitors and ancestors and guardians of the Lepchas. They were created by Itpomu who placed rice and millet and maize in their charge when she made these crops. The people of Mayal live in seven huts; they are immortal; each morning they are infants,—at midday they are grown men, and in the evening they are old. They all have huge [164 787] goitres and it is from them that people know that big goitres are a sign of prosperity and a large harvest. They wear the traditional Lepcha costume of clothes made of nettle cloth and small basket-work hats. They are between gods and ordinary human beings; they are not gods because they live on earth; but they are not human because they do not die. The land of Mayal is far up the Tulung valley somewhere behind the Kinchenjunga; at some time in the past the road thither was open, but now it has been closed and is as unpassable as the cutting edge of a knife.

[774] On the road to Mayal are three guardian spirits called Sog-po, who are brothers; the eldest is called Mayel-Yook-Rum, he is also called Pong-rum when the hunters offer sacrifice to him; his younger brothers, Mi-tik and Tom-tik, are cruel deities who kill and eat men and animals. Tom-tik is like a bear. They are the special guardians of the ibex [825] and the musk deer which come from Mayal, which is the reason why these animals are so difficult to kill. In the country of Mayal crops grow a hundred times as big as here, and it is from this country that the seeds of our present crops originate. These crops are always ripe for harvesting. The migratory birds are called 'Mayel fo', birds of Mayal, and [825] they are sent out by the people of Mayal to the Lepchas to indicate the seasons and the times when various agricultural acts should be performed. When the time comes for the [825] migrating birds to return to Mayal, the parent birds die on the way and only the newly hatched ones survive the arduous journey to Mayal from whence they are sent the next year to act as indicators for the Lepchas. The people of Mayal have no wives living with them but the two oldest of the people Adoo-Yook and Alau-Yook, have in a way, as wives the two [776 772] sisters Talyeu-Nimu and Sanguo-Nimu, who are the spirits of the earth: these two women lie on their backs on the earth

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and on their bellies are the cultivable lands. Into this Adoo-Yook and Alau-Yook send rice and millet and maize, just as if it were human seed from a husband and the women are fertilised and fruitful.

In the old days the path to Mayal was opened and sometimes the people of Mayal came to other parts of the world; and occasionally adventurous hunters found their way into the Mayal country."[36] According to other stories not only the seven brothers but all the ancestors of the Lepchas live in Mayal.

Another Lepcha named Ti-gung-a-thik and Ni-gung-a-ngal as the original ancestor. They lived a happy life and could hunt and roam wherever they liked. Food was available everywhere. Suffering and death were unknown to them. Their land was called Nemayal. Two Lepcha hunters once came to the land. The inhabitants gave them the seeds of gherkins, millets, rice and maize. The hunters however, forgot to ask them when the seeds were to be sown. So they went back again and asked them for the necessary instructions. The people of Mayal said, "When the ducks come back from Tibet, then you must sow the seed." That is February or March. Still they did not know a suitable season for planting the other seeds. They had, therefore, to spend a great deal of time making experiments until they found the most suitable times for sowing the seeds. Among these seeds was rice, which was supposed to be used only for sacrificial purposes. They chewed the husks of rice to see if the seed was ripe, and, finding it sweet, they began to consume it as food for themselves.[37]

The Dān-ei Bong-thing from the Song-bur-mu tribe, who lives in Kafir-Basti, gave us the following information: The Lepchas come from Song-bur-tchu on the left of the Kang-chen-mdzod-lnga. In the beginning there existed only the god Rum. No demons existed at the time. The god had no special name. He then created a pair of deities, Agek-rum and Alat-rum, who are the protecting spirits of procreation. Ta-she-thing and Tög-bu-thing then came into being. But

36. op. cit. p. 235 sq.
37. Report from Ilam-ong near Maria-Basti.

11;Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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it falls down to the earth once again. This is the line of action from lower to the higher. And so it must be that the land of the gods must be below." In this as in other matters we find that there is a varied line of reasoning among the Lepchas.

(*c*) The Land of Souls

Some Lepchas believe that the souls of the departed go to the country of the ancestors, Ren djong or Mayal. Others say on the contrary that the soul goes to Rum-lyang. It was there before birth ; thither it returns again after death to be born again as a little child in the land of souls. Immediately after death, the soul goes to an intermediate place Sōn-lyang, originally called Sōm-lon, the leader of souls. The Bong-thing summons it back thence and asks it, at the death ceremony how it died, whether it was through illness or through the magic of wicked men. The soul then comes to the ear of the Bong-thing and gives him this important information. He makes the necessary provisions for the individual soul on the basis of this information. The Mun or Bong-thing then leads the soul to the Rum-lyang and locks it up securely so that it cannot return to its pristine home or relations or cause them any manner of harm. The entire ceremony is performed in the Sang-lion rite. A year after death the Bong-thing goes in a trance to Rum-lyang, opens up the place where the soul had been locked. There he finds a little child. He dresses it up in a child's clothes and releases it to live and grow up among the other ancestors.[51]

According to others there is an intermediate place called Tiamtan, or Sari-rung-dong-chen or Siri-nong-dong-chen.[52] Another place is called Nyo-lyang, the abode of the wicked. There are divergent views about the land of souls, just as there are about the land of gods. An old Mun woman of Git-biyong gave us this pertinent item of information, "We bring the souls of the dead very high up in to the heavens and very near the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing. He it is who has created us, the animals and everything else."

51. cfr. G. Gorer, Himalayan Village, London 1938, p. 353 sq.
52. cfr. Stocks, op. cit. p. 337.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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793 The Han-bu-ni from Git-biyong gives us a rather detailed report of her initiation. "My maternal grandmother was a Mun. At the age of nine I fell ill and commenced speaking [787] a variety of languages. The people said, 'It is the spirit of [775] her grandmother, the Mun let, who speaks through her.' So my parents summoned a Bong-thing who performed the sacrifice of initiation, offering a bullock, a pig and a goat. Thereafter I was apprenticed to a female Mun for a period of three years during which time I was taught the prayers, the traditions and the ceremonies. After the completion of my apprenticeship the sacrifice was renewed. I was given full powers and began to sacrifice independently. Should [782] I desire to conjure up my spirit, I offer chi, butter, and incense in sacrifice and the spirit quickly responds to my summons to appear. I notice at first a blurred object, like a cloud of dust approaching me. My heart tells me that the spirit is near."

This woman, who is over eighty years of age today, and is Mun as well as Andshemu, has recently become a [797] Christian. We asked her whether the old spirit did not harass her for having given up her former priesthood and ceased to honour it. "Not at all. The spirit does not torment me in the least," she replied. Later she proudly said to the Lepchas, "It is my privilege to instruct this great European priest who comes from China and Tibet, in the teachings of the Mun and the Bong-thing." She was very pleased to find us interested in the old traditions. She knew a little Tibetan, and loved to converse with us in that language.

796 A Rong woman, whose father and brother are both Bong-thing, has narrated to us the following story, "In the evening my father drank chi. This made him excited [535] and he danced through the night. Very often three more Bong-thing came to our house and they all danced together. That is customary with the Mun and the Bong-thing. In the neighbourhood there are three women and two men who hold their dances by turns in each other's houses. This dance festival must take place at least three times a year; —in April at the barley harvest; in September at the first [778] millet harvest, and finally in October at the second millet [782] harvest. Torma (Tibetan expression for sacrificial images)

3: Bell G-5 (1904-21) 1928 AJ1 Tibet AJ1
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Soon afterwards the house, in which the *chō-ten* was kept, fell down. The *chō-ten* itself was broken, the corpse was uncovered and went tumbling down the hill-side, four hundred feet, rolling over and over. When the people went to look at it, they were astonished to find that not only was the corpse uninjured, except for a cut near one of the ankles, but that the flesh on the body was as fresh as during the lady's lifetime. They found, too, that it was pure flesh, and not built up with clay, as is the regular practice. The body was carried up the hill again and is encased now in a fresh *chō-ten*. All believe this story with the single-minded devotion to their religion that characterizes the Tibetan. They believe also that when the body was placed in the *chō-ten*, the cut would gradually heal up, as the lady was 'like a manifestation of the Buddha'.

The religion of the Lepchas of Sikkim resembles in many ways the pre-Buddhist faith of Tibet, known as *Pön*. As to their funeral ceremonies the History of Sikkim says:

'When a person dies and a funeral ceremony has to be performed, it is done thus: They sacrifice a bull or cow, a fowl or pig, and believe that this is the present of the deceased to the spirits of his ancestors. For this purpose they slay a pig, and, having pierced the entire length of its body with a sharpened bamboo stake, the *Pön-pön* recites some prayers or incantations called *Pön* for three days and nights.'

The Lepchas believe that their spirits are taken after death through subterranean passages to the local deities of Kinchinjunga [1]—the highest mountain in Sikkim and the third highest in the world—as well as to those of other mountains. Different sub-tribes among the Lepchas have different subterranean passages.

But Buddhism, after the Tibetan pattern, is firm set in Sikkim. And therefore many Lepchas nowadays resort to Buddhist rites. As in Tibet throughout the centuries,

[1] The pronunciation usual among Europeans. The correct pronunciation is *Kang Chen Dzö Nga*, 'The Five Treasuries of Great Snow'.